

## **DARE network: points to be considered when revising the key competences framework.**

The DARE network welcomes the initiative for the revision of key competences.

As a network providing expertise from the view of non-formal Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship Education we want to underline some points to be considered in the revision process:

- The orientation of any learning on key competences has become meanwhile a well-established tool for the design, layout and implementation of any learning processes. Instead of reinventing the wheel we ask for slight and reasonable development of the frames aiming for more coherence among the single competences fields. Our aim should be not to put learning systems and environments under more pressure as they already are. Adult learning and youth work have developed in the recent years a various amount of tools oriented on key competences to train pedagogical staff. Also there are plenty of educational concepts to apply the existing frames of key competences practically into any learning settings with children, youth and adults.
- The solely economic utilization of learning is a threat to democracy. Instead the transversal character of learning in order to create the conditions for a meaningful living together in our societies needs to be more acknowledged. Therefore the relation of all key competences to Human Rights, to civic and social development be it on the personal level, be it on societal level needs to be better worked out.
- Civic competences enable for adequate participation, democratic involvement in society and therefore should be of a transversal character, which affects all fields of competence learning. This transversal character of civic competences should be more focused when reframing the LLL- competencies framework.
- Especially we ask for coherence of the LLL-competences with other competences models such as the [competences for democratic culture](#) provided by the COE.
- To appropriately learn key competences requires adequate learning environments. Especially for the field of non-formal education - be it in youth work or adult learning - in most EU countries (and beyond) there is a huge gap of systemic and infrastructural back- up, which in the recent years has become bigger: this relates to – initial training of staff, the financial support to organisations providing NFE, the establishment of non-formal education as independent training and learning field which is not primarily oriented on the idea of economic utilization, but asks for a wider impact on democratic and pluralist societies. In line with the revision of key competences framework we ask the EU to put more emphasis on the systemic back-up and reflect upon the need to establish adequate learning pathways and systems. Especially under a lifelong learning perspective the importance of a proper connection between the field of non-formal education and formal, higher and VET education becomes more important and can work only if the different learning educational fields (formal, non-formal, informal) are adequately recognized.

- Acquiring digital competences should be much more oriented towards their democracy related dimensions: the importance to offer training and experiential learning spaces for critical media use, media literacy and the ability to reflect upon social media in democratic societies has become a core field with high relevance for living together in democratic societies. It should be entirely clear that this dimension requires age-adequate learning settings and also should be recognized as being of a transversal character. Especially related to learning with youth and kids we need to emphasize that digital competences are an emerging learning field where the learners have often more skills than the educators.
- There should be highlighted the need to develop new forms of assessment that fully take into consideration the different approaches and aims of formal, non-formal learning and of informal learning.
- The competence model clearly should refer to the holistic character of learning with the aim to contribute to the **shaping of impact oriented learning processes**: Civic Competence is formed in a wide, heterogenic learning space and therefore characterized through an interaction of different learning experiences that have to be connected in a consciously designed learning process. The more these different learning opportunities complement each other the more the learning process becomes efficient and sustainable. Such processes can be designed in formal and non-formal learning environments. They combine group interaction and learning, self-experience, cognitive learning, opportunities for informal learning and reflection and should provide any learner for experiencing democratic self-efficacy.

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## EFIL position on the revision of key competences

The European Federation for Intercultural Learning has been using the [8 key competences framework](#) to define learning outcomes of volunteers and pupils involved in our learning mobility programmes. However, we believe that intercultural competences are not well included in the 8 key competences and that at this time of revision of the framework, it is important to bring some clarity in the definitions.

In the current framework, intercultural competences is included under 'social and civic competences' but no proper definition is provided. Intercultural aspects are touched upon both definition of social and civic competences, but there is not a clear space given to the specificities related to 'intercultural competence'.

Therefore, at the moment, intercultural competence, instead of being clearly identified by educators under 'social and civic competences' where it belongs in the framework, it is confused with 'Cultural awareness and expression'. However, 'cultural awareness and expression' only refers to one dimension of intercultural competence, namely the one related to cultural heritage and arts. Intercultural competences is much more than this.

Finally, intercultural aspects are also mentioned in the definition of communication in foreign languages.

We believe that in the new framework, intercultural competences should be clearly defined and be a separate group, or included under social and civic competences with a proper definition. The definition should also tackle the links between intercultural competences and the other competences of the framework, namely 'mother tongue', 'foreign language', 'digital', 'cultural awareness and expression', 'sense of initiative and entrepreneurship', 'learning to learn' (see more information about these links below). Finally, we suggest that the competence 'cultural awareness and expression' is changed to 'creativity and cultural heritage' to better convey its content.

## Definitions of concepts linked to intercultural competences

### The assumed concept of culture

The non-essentialist view of culture (see *Adrian Holliday, 2011*) stresses the complexity and multiplicity of individual identities, going way beyond geographical or family backgrounds. People participate in different groups or cultures, which may be defined according to nationality, ethnicity, language, age, social class, gender, religion, political or sexual orientation, etc. Their sense of belonging is not only multiple, but it also shifts - increasing or diminishing in intensity - according to the context and purpose of their interactions, as well as their interlocutors. The cultural identity may be inconsistent, negotiated and co-constructed in different situations, and may depend on power and voice in a given relationship.

### **Intercultural situations** (see *Competences for democratic culture, CoE, p. 20*)

Every interpersonal situation is potentially an intercultural situation. Often, when we encounter other people, we respond to them as individuals who have a range of attributes distinguishing them from other people. However, sometimes we respond to them instead in terms of their cultural affiliations, and when this occurs we group them together with other people who share these affiliations with them. There are several factors which prompt us to shift our frame of reference from the individual and interpersonal to the intercultural. These include, among others:

- the presence of salient cultural emblems or practices that invoke the cultural category in the mind of the perceiver,
- the frequent use of cultural categories to think about other people so that these categories are readily accessed when interacting with others,
- usefulness of a cultural category in helping to understand why another person is behaving in the way that they are, etc.

Thus, intercultural situations arise when an individual perceives another person (or group of people) as being culturally different from themselves. Every human being is regularly exposed to intercultural situations, with or without direct interactions with others.

### **Intercultural competences - ability to mobilise and deploy relevant attitudes, skills and knowledge in order to interact effectively and appropriately in different intercultural situations.**

(D.K. Deardorff, *The SAGE book of intercultural competence; CoE, Competences for democratic culture*)

Intercultural competences include recognition and appreciation of one's own and others' multiplicities and how they come into play in different situations. They should not resume to prescriptive solutions for 'specific cultures' and instead focus on preparing for the unexpected, careful perception and dealing with uncertainty. They imply readiness to deal with difference in an ethno-relative manner (viewing values and behaviours of others from broader perspectives, and not seeing one's own as normal/superior). However they also need to avoid the mechanism of othering – seeing the world in categories us vs. them, where “them” are those who are different from me/us. Identifying and labeling “the other” tends to ascribe a fixed identity to them, where it may be difficult or impossible to contest the ascription (hence intercultural competence includes also issues of power and voice of interlocutors).

Intercultural competences are tightly linked to empathy, listening and observing, flexibility, conflict resolution skills and tolerance of ambiguity. They also go hand in hand with civic-mindedness, valuing democracy and human rights.

**Acquisition of intercultural competences** (intercultural learning) is a lifelong learning process, which brings best results through conscious, planned and facilitated experiential learning (D.Kolb, *Experiential Learning, 1984*). It is important to note that exposure and interaction with people of different cultural affiliations does not imply, let alone guarantee, intercultural learning (Y.Amir, *Contact Hypothesis in Ethnic Relations*). It is also worth noting that the non-formal education sector has so far the strongest experience in facilitating these educational processes.

Assessment of intercultural competences, just as with other attitude- and skill-based competences, is a complex task, which cannot be responded by standard quantitative testing procedures. Since intercultural learning is a life-long learning process, intercultural competence can never be fully achieved. Assessment should be qualitative and formative, voluntary, participatory, tailored and learner centred.

### Links between Intercultural competence and other Key Competences

Next to the multiple links with social and civic competences (see above), the intercultural competences are also connected to other groups of competences in the framework. This link is twofold: 1) intercultural competences are needed to perform well in other key competences, and 2) other key competences are needed in order to develop intercultural competences.

### Mother tongue and Foreign languages, including body language

1. competence in a foreign language always requires knowledge of the foreign culture, skill to detect different situations determined by a different environment, attitude of being open and tolerant of ambiguity in order to express yourself in the most appropriate way within a given context.
2. Competence in a foreign language is needed to fully understand other culture and be interculturally competent.

### Awareness of cultural heritage

1. Being aware of the cultural and linguistic diversity in the world is essential to understand how each culture has been influenced and will continue being influenced by other ones over time.
2. Being aware of one's own cultural heritage and of others, and how it influences identities and relationships.

### Learning to learn

- 2) being able to learn, including having motivation and ability to change attitudes and behaviours, is essential to develop intercultural competences.

### Digital competences / media literacy

- 1) Media literacy requires also a certain degree of cultural sensitivity.
- 2) Media are a source of knowledge about different cultures and social media allow for a direct exchange between people from diverse backgrounds.  
"Media discourse is the main source of people's knowledge, attitudes and ideologies, both of other elites and of ordinary citizens. Of course, the media do this in joint production with the other elites, primarily politicians, professionals and academics." (Van Dijk, 2000, p. 36).

### Entrepreneurship

- 1) In an increasingly global market, teamwork and entrepreneurship are skills practiced in multicultural groups, therefore intercultural competences play an important role.
- 2) Self-efficacy is needed to develop intercultural competences: "self efficacy is the positive belief in one's own ability to undertake actions and confidence that one can understand issues, select appropriate methods, navigate obstacles successfully" (see *Competences for democratic culture*).

Yet, the focus of intercultural competences on interaction gives them a clear place next to the social/interpersonal/civic ones.

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## **LLLP reaction to the Key Competences framework for Lifelong Learning review**

*Brussels, April 2017*

The European Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, adopted in 2006 by the European Parliament and the Council Recommendation, **set out eight key competences**, each being a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes. In the last decade the framework has influenced national policy reforms in education and training in developing a more competence-based teaching and learning across Member States. The reforms have been introduced mostly in the school education sector, and to only limited extent for the recognition of the non-formal and informal learning (e.g. the Youthpass certificate).

Ten years later, the European Commission launched the review process of the Framework, as part of the New Skills Agenda for Europe initiative. The **Lifelong Learning Platform acknowledges the importance of the common framework of crucial competences for life across Member States**, presenting a step forward to a holistic approach to education and training. Overall, the Platform stresses the need for further synergies and a better **alignment with other existing frameworks** and research, such as from the **OECD, Council of Europe and the ICCS study**.

Societal challenges have multiplied and diversified in Europe and beyond since the Framework first emerged. There is a clear need to **reflect the current and future political, social, economic, ecological and technological development**. Therefore, the Platform welcomes the review of the Key Competences Framework, in order to adjust respective tools and processes to better support the development of the key competences for all. The Platform firmly believes that their common link **is, and shall be, the empowerment of the individual learners** and their ability to make relevant and /informed choices in an ever-fast changing, unpredictable and globalised environment of the 21st century! Nevertheless, while focusing on learners, we should not forget that **investing in the competences of teachers and educators is equally investing in the whole future generations!**

In the last decade, more and more has been made known about co- and socially-shared regulation of learning. Inclusion of **self-regulation<sup>1</sup> skills in the competence framework is vital! These empower learners in multiple life domains and support their** academic achievement, motivation, wellbeing and engagement in lifelong learning. The **research on teaching self-regulation skills and their positive effect on people's lives is abundant** and making use of it will support policy makers, education providers, employers, and learners across Europe to nurture development of strong self- and co-regulated citizens<sup>2</sup>. **"Soft skills" or "transversal skills"** such as communication skills,

<sup>1</sup> Self-regulation is studied mainly in the field of formal education where self-regulated learners are defined as follows: Self-regulated learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behavior, guided and -+ constrained by their goals and the contextual features in the environment (Pintrich, 2000, p. 453).

<sup>2</sup> Pintrich, P. R. (2000). The role of goal orientation in self-regulated learning. In M. Boekaerts, P. R. Pintrich, & M. Zeidner (Eds.),

negotiation and conflict management, leadership, team management, creativity, project management and the ability to enhance personal well-being are becoming progressively an imperative. These contribute to raising the quality of life and reinforcing the specific or “job” competences. That is why they are increasingly appreciated by employers, too.

In particular, the LLLPlatform would suggest more **emphasis on personal development**, a clearer **definition of the intercultural competence** and a more **comprehensive definition of the social and civic competences**, reflecting the diversity of human beings and their values. Furthermore, a reformulation of **digital skills is necessary**, as they do not imply merely knowing how to use technology at school but rather to develop critical thinking and media literacy in an age-appropriate way. It is imperative to address the **global dimension** of the set of competences. While putting strong focus on Europe, the current framework does not appropriately recognise the interdependence between **local, national, European and global realities**. The role of key competences in achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals<sup>3</sup> could be better reflected**. Therefore, the definitions require flexibility when addressing the different socio-cultural and economic contexts of the society we live in. Finally, there should be a better **link between all the competences** and how they correlate within the Framework.

Revising the definitions themselves will not be sufficient. It is equally important to look into **how the key competences are assessed**. Namely, as standardised tests measure a narrow range of traditional competences at best, and give incentives to merely teach for the test, they are not suited for exploiting the full potential of the framework. Therefore, a variety of different assessment methods, and in particular formative assessment, should be further explored and used. **We strongly encourage to shift the balance towards assessment that allows an increasing flexibility, creativity and innovation!**

Last but not least, while we acknowledge the necessity of the review, it is **crucial to prepare for its full implementation at national level**, not only in the formal education sector, but also in the non-formal and informal learning environments. The Platform strongly recommends to the European Commission to **provide further support to Member States in the implementation process**. This requires additional efforts in making learning visible by investing in validation methods and tools, for instance.

Finally, the Lifelong Learning Platform encourages all stakeholders to contribute to [the public consultation](#), open until 19 May, to make sure citizens’ voice is heard and increase the relevance of policy making!



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<sup>3</sup> SDGs United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 “Education 2030”[1], in particular Target 4.7[2]

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[1] <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>

[2] By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.

The [Lifelong Learning Platform](#) (LLL-P) is an umbrella organisation that gathers 40 European networks active in the field of education and training, coming from all EU Member States and beyond. Currently these organisations represent more than 50 000 educational institutions covering all sectors of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Established in 2005, LLL-P promotes a vision of lifelong learning based on equity, social cohesion, active citizenship and personal development. The platform works as a space for knowledge exchange between its member networks and uses their expertise to discuss and feed in EU policy-making, making sure that European citizens have their voice heard. In that sense LLL-P contributes to a better understanding and dialogue between the grassroots level and European institutions.